

**CITY OF TAKOMA PARK, MARYLAND
MINUTES
(ADOPTED 3/14/05)**

**PRESENTATION, INTERVIEWS & WORKSESSION
OF THE CITY COUNCIL**

Monday, February 7, 2005

OFFICIALS PRESENT:

Mayor Porter	City Manager Matthews
Councilmember Austin-Lane	City Clerk Waters
Councilmember Barry	Housing and Community Development Director Daines
Councilmember Elrich	Recreation Director Haiduven
Councilmember Mizeur	Community Center Construction Manager George
Councilmember Seamens	Senior Planner Inerfeld
Councilmember Williams	

The Council convened at 7:39 p.m. in the Council Chambers of the Municipal Building, 7500 Maple Avenue, Takoma Park, Maryland.

COUNCIL COMMENTS

Mayor Porter commented that at the recent Mayor's Conference she spoke to members of our State Delegation about the City's bond bill. She also commented that the Governor's budget does include funding for the Transportation Trust Fund. The funds are at risk, however, because of cuts expected as the General Assembly works to balance the budget. Finally, Ms. Porter noted that the municipal electrical aggregation bill will be introduced on the House side by Delegate Hubbard.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Sabrina Baron, President of Historic Takoma, spoke about the wayfinding project. She expressed concern about the size of the larger signs. Ten to 12 feet tall is too tall. At this juncture, it might be a good idea to use the remaining budgeted to flush out this and other design issues. It is better to spend more to get a better product. These signs will be with us for many years.

PRESENTATION

1. Update on the Community Center Construction Project

Ms. Matthews responded to questions she had been asked by Council about the number of workers on the construction site. From January 24 through January 29, there were a total of 162 workers on site. Major activities included installation of the sprinkler systems, re-routing heat lines, drywall work, and pouring of concrete wall and column forms.

Staff has been working with Mr. Kohn on the issue of entryways to the building, where the pavers will be installed in a future phase. Staff will be working on an internal ADA-compliant signage system for the building. This item is not in the current contract. Montgomery County has requested a consolidated drawing of the current construction and the future community plaza level so that there can be one building permit for the project.

Finally, Ms. Matthews said that at Council's request she has reviewed the scope of the work for the community plaza level to see if it can be scaled back any further. She said she does not think it cannot be scaled back without compromising the usage of the site and the commitments made to the community.

2. Liz Lerman Dance Exchange

Ms. Daines was present for the discussion, along with representatives from Liz Lerman Dance Exchange: Joy Gill, Executive Director, John Urciolo, member of the Board of Directors, and Randi Davis of the architectural firm working on the project.

Ms. Gill indicated that in last year, the Dance Exchange has completed a comprehensive study of what they want to contribute to the community. They want to have the building continue to be the home base of the company. The renovation should not impact the surrounding community beyond the current use. They want to reorganize the interior space to provide better movement within the building and are looking at upgrades to the electrical systems. They have reviewed their plans with the county, have talked with City officials, and will be going to the Facade Advisory Board. Additionally, company representatives plan to talk to the police department about safety issues.

Mr. Urciolo described the conceptual plan of the renovation project. It does not impact current parking requirements.

Ms. Austin-Lane commented that she is glad that the Exchange has determined to retain the Takoma Park identity. She is glad that have heard community concerns about the lighting and the need for expanded space. She said she is happy that the Exchange has made the effort to get input from the community.

Ms. Porter asked for clarification about the lighting around the building.

Ms. Davis remarked about how the lights will be directed down on the canopies such that the light will be diffused.

Mr. Barry asked about signage and the size of the windows.

Ms. Gill replied that they may retain the current signage due to fiscal constraints. The approaching 30th anniversary may be an opportunity to be more creative. The windows will remain. Ms. Davis noted that one window that is currently boarded will be opened

Mr. Elrich commented on the impact of the overhead electrical wires. He said he appreciates the proposed expansion.

INTERVIEWS

3. Nuclear-Free Takoma Park Committee - Linda Gunter

The Council interviewed Linda Gunter who has expressed interest in appointment to the committee.

4. Ethics Commission - Emily Schabacker.

The Council interviewed Emily Schabacker who has expressed interest in appointment to the committee.

WORKSESSION

5. Gateway Wayfinding Sign System

Ms. Porter outlined the decisions to be made this evening to provide direction to staff and the advisory committee on the directional signs, and other points about specifics on the signs and funding.

Mr. Inerfeld summarized previous discussions with the Council. We were asked to redesign the signs so that they would better represent the diversity of community style. He commented on the changes to the different sign designs and explained primary gateway locations, secondary gateway locations, and tertiary gateway locations. He described some photos of super-imposed examples over existing signs and remarked about height issues. Mr. Inerfeld said he would like to request that SHA approve 6.5 foot sign poles.

Ms. Austin-Lane questioned the location of the vehicular directional signs.

Mr. Inerfeld responded. There are some things that he has heard from Advisory Committee last Thursday night. He explained the progression of different sized signs. In addition to the size of the sign, the sign posts have changed in design.

Ms. Porter commented that it seems that a lot of the space on the signs is the blank space.

Mr. Inerfeld replied that one of the concerns was that with some of the longer destination names within the city, it would be difficult to put the arrows to the side.

Ms. Porter suggested further exploration of the options related to the arrow locations.

Mr. Inerfeld indicated that the Advisory Committee endorsed the Gallagher & Associates recommendations with a couple of suggestions related to sign language and physical size. We have talked to the consultants about ways to make the signs smaller. The committee endorsed a number of the recommendations (except the tertiary and directional sign size). There is still not a consensus on the color. If we can get down to three or four colors, the consultant could provide an 11x17 panel mock-up of the “color” example. It would give better sense of how the signs would appear. The Advisory Committee recommended implementation of the first phase of the sign program.

Ms. Austin-Lane asked if the committee indicated their preference on colors.

Mr. Inerfeld commented about some of the preferences that have been expressed. There is no consensus. He said he could go back and ask for the committee to narrow the scope.

Council discussed their color preferences.

Mr. Barry asked if the logo controversy is resolved.

Ms. Matthews indicated that it is not resolved.

Ms. Mizeur asked how will we engage in a contract for future work on the project (additional phases)? How will we ensure quality and systematic design.

Mr. Inerfeld said he will check with Gallagher and Associates about the fabricator consistency.

Ms. Daines indicated that we will get engineering drawings that will be submitted over time to the fabricator. The cost may increase.

Ms. Mizeur asked if there is a proposal from the committee about where we spend our money?

Mr. Inerfeld responded. We have talked about including in the bidding package use of Historic Takoma, Inc. funds to purchase some signs as part of the package.

Ms. Mizeur asked how do you propose resolving the matter of location for the gateway signs since there is not enough funding to place signs at each gateway.

Staff responded that there are some variables that may assist in the determination.

Lorraine Pearsall commented on the Rockville sign design, which she indicated that everyone liked. They like the human scale of the Rockville signs. There was a unanimous feeling that the dimensions of the proposed directional signs are monumental.

Ms. Porter asked about the recommendation of the advisory committee?

Mr. Inerfeld responded that they would like to see the directional signs smaller. Additionally, they would like to see two mock-ups once we have designs that have a consensus.

Ms. Baron said she did not think there was a consensus. Everyone was in agreement that there should be a pedestrian kiosk (probably on Maple/Carroll) and area identification signs. But there was no decision that the money should be spent as a whole—it was just loosely discussed at the end.

Mr. Seamens commented that he does not feel comfortable with the design plans which do not fit with the community. We want to have a successful plan. I wonder if we should stop thinking about buying signs and really move forward with identifying the signs that the Council and residents feel comfortable with.

Mr. Elrich said he thinks this is a waste of money. I do not know where we are going to come up with the balance to complete the projects. It seems a lot of money has been spent to be this far away from a public agreement.

Mr. Williams said we knew a long time before two weeks ago that a lot of money would go toward design and engineering, and that we would only get a couple of signs. He said he also agrees that we will not get much in terms of signs with remaining money. He does not want to spend more on designing. What are the requirements?

Ms. Daines replied that we have to get information to the State Board of Public Works about a proposal for balance of original amount. We could go ahead with the \$42,000 and forgo the \$17,700.

Council discussed the finances with respect to requirements.

Mr. Elrich asked if the committee has priorities?

Ms. Baron said pedestrian kiosks have the greatest agreement; then the area directional signs, and one primary gateway sign. The HPC has indicated that it will support getting waivers to get smaller letters and poles. The OTBA and the Arts and Humanities Commission has also expressed support for going to SHA.

Mr. Inerfeld said it will take time to complete directional sign designs and to then hear back from SHA. He explained the immediate timeline and the related costs.

Ms. Mizeur asked, why didn't Gallagher originally propose the Rockville designs?

Mr. Inerfeld explained, we have longer names on the signs. The system was designed around the length of titles.

Ms. Daines added, it was not as designed around vehicular traffic. It has a lot to do with placement of signs. Staff is asking for the Council to reach a consensus on the presented sign models as the directional signs. The color and logo could still be changed.

Ms. Porter asked, can we drop the tertiary and directional signs off of the proposal, and move forward?

Mr. Inerfeld replied that we might have some flexibility with the fabricator.

Council discussed the proposed logo and size.

Mr. Inerfeld said we could do a tertiary mock-up later in the process.

Ms. Porter said, we need to move forward on some matters that are not controversial – leave out the size, color and decision on the tertiary signs and the directional signs.

Mr. Elrich said he would like the advisory committee to prioritize how they want to best spend the money. It sounds like the kiosk is worthwhile. What else is desired?

Ms. Porter commented, it might be helpful to hear a break-out of the costs. We need to give approval to bid-out the project.

Mr. Inerfeld said, the bid package should include five types of signs. He noted the ones proposed.

Ms. Austin-Lane commented, I have heard from business community that they need some signs directing people to the business areas.

Ms. Daines remarked about the desired cooperation with the business community to provide that type of signage.

There was Council consensus to go forward with a bid proposal on the five sign designs.

Ms. Austin-Lane said she hopes we can get more creative about how we approach this. This signage system is for a very small city.

Ms. Mizeur suggested that we collaborate with State legislators on assistance with SHA.

BREAK

The Council took a scheduled recess at 9:27 p.m. and later reconvened at 9:41 p.m.

6. Use of “Green Principles” in the Community Center Project

Present for the discussion were Venita George, Howard Kohn, Andy Keleman, Steve Nato, John Archibald, and Albert Nunez.

Mr. Kohn summarized the meeting of the Citizens Liaison Committee to the Community Center that took place yesterday. The committee made a number of recommendations. He distinguished between those recommendations considered mandatory and those listed as desired. John Archibald and Albert Nunez are here to discuss solar energy.

Mr. Nunez commented on his and Mr. Archibald’s experience and knowledge on the subject. He described the proposed roof top units and the function of the overall system.

Mr. Archibald said he looked at the design in the building. He noted that the facade had a Southern orientation with a proposed ideal color for solar energy collection. He remarked about other projects which have been very successful with collection of solar heat. He explained the basis for the current recommendations. Mr. Archibald described the economizer heat pumps and how they save energy costs. In terms of a business aspect, there is the installation of the hardware. The City would have the option of the company installing the hardware and, over time, funding the cost of the energy. Over a period of time, we will keep billing for energy. The downside is that the City would actually save more money buying the hardware up front.

In response to a question from Mr. Elrich, Mr. Archibald provided an estimated cost for the first option (approximately \$25,000), but said he has not run the numbers for the second option.

Mr. Williams asked about the payback on financing if we were to take the second option. Mr. Nunez remarked about the variables and the effect on the payback cost. Mr. Archibald added his comments. He said he thinks would be less than nine years in that purchase approach.

Mr. Williams commented that it may be more taking into account the tie-ins and mechanical elements.

Ms. Mizeur and Mr. Elrich had questions about the lease structure and the tax credit to the commercial entity.

Mr. Archibald provided a detailed explanation of tax applications. He described the mechanical equipment.

Ms. Porter asked for clarification on the price, \$25,800 for both systems?

Mr. Archibald said yes.

Ms. Porter asked about maintenance costs.

Mr. Archibald said it would involve checking the operation of fans and maintaining the filters. They would also monitor to ensure that the system delivers energy efficiently.

Ms. Austin-Lane referred to cost estimates of investment recovery over nine years. It would be nine years that we would contribute less to global warming. She said she would like to see this item dealt with on a continual basis.

Mr. Nunez said that lighting and HVAC components are equally as important. He remarked about energy “bundling”.

Ms. George said that staff will continue discussions about the proposals. We need to get direction on how the Council wants to proceed with the community plaza level.

Mr. Nunez explained why the funding for the solar heating is no longer available, since it was once associated with the restroom facilities in the gym. He explained the payback range of photovoltaic tracking devices and pump technology (20-25 year range – straight line projections). Thermal is more efficient.

Ms. Matthews commented that we have had a very limited opportunity to review this with the architect. He did not see the first two items as being a problem (Tier I). We need to further explore items remaining on the list. I would like discretion to continue to work with those involved. There may be some practical considerations.

Mr. Williams expressed concern about references to California requirements. It should be spelled out in terms of the language of the specification.

Mr. Elrich said items #1 and #2 in Tier I make sense. The solar energy item makes sense regardless. I would like to see bids on the alternatives, but do not want to do anything to automatically drive-up the price.

Mr. Seamens asked, with respect to the heating and cooling units in the second and third floor that we have heard so much about needing to be replaced, would this affect those units?

Mr. Archibald replied that this would not be in place of that matter

Ms. Matthews said, this proposal would be in addition to and supplemental to that needed system. The system being referred to by Councilmember Seamens is related to an existing required change order.

Ms. Austin-Lane said she would like to see the Council go forward with the top two items, then have the City Manager work with the committee on the next six items. Staff should work on the

seventh item, outside of the RFP.

There was Council consensus.

ADJOURNMENT

The Council adjourned for the evening at 10:27 p.m.